Sanitary Surveys of Drinking Water Systems

State rules require periodic sanitary survey inspections

A sanitary survey is a periodic inspection of water system facilities, operations and records used to identify conditions that may present a sanitary or public health risk. Washington state drinking water rules require all Group A public drinking water systems to have a routine sanitary survey once every three to five years.

The Department of Health Office of Drinking Water (ODW) conducts sanitary surveys. However, in some counties, ODW contracts with local health jurisdiction staff or an independent consultant to conduct the surveys. These contractors are called "third party qualified sanitary surveyors" (QSS).

Preparing for your system's sanitary survey

ODW staff will notify you when a sanitary survey is required. The surveyor will then contact you to arrange a time to conduct the survey. The surveyor will try to meet your scheduling needs. Water systems that do not schedule a survey will receive another notice with a deadline for obtaining an inspection. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in:

- Increased monthly coliform monitoring to five samples per month.
- A red operating permit.
- State significant non-complier status and possible civil penalties.

Eight minimum components of all routine sanitary surveys:

1. Planning and management documents.
2. Distribution system and status of cross-connection control program.
3. Source and sanitary control area.
4. Source pumps and pumping facilities.
5. Source treatment procedures and equipment.
6. Pressure tanks.
7. Finished water storage.
8. Operator certification status.

Fees

ODW or your local health jurisdiction collects your sanitary survey fee. If ODW collects the fee, you will get a bill with your final inspection report. If the local health jurisdiction collects the fee, it is payable when they schedule a survey or when you get your final inspection report.

Washington State Department of
Health
Division of Environmental Health
Office of Drinking Water

HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

Sanitary Survey Inspection Steps

1. ODW staff or a QSS informs you when you need to have a sanitary survey.
2. You and the surveyor agree on a survey date.
3. You arrange for system personnel to be available on the survey date so they can share system records, and show the surveyor around the water system.
4. You prepare for the inspection by gathering, reviewing, and organizing records to share with the surveyor (Water Facility Inventories, water quality results, maintenance records and so on).
5. System personnel meet with the surveyor to discuss records and provide a tour of the system facilities, pump house, treatment unit, storage, booster pumps, distribution system, and so on.
6. After the survey, the surveyor will give you and ODW a completed survey checklist and summary report of findings. Be sure to read the report carefully; it describes deficiencies found during the inspection.
7. ODW will review the report and notify you in writing if any immediate follow-up action is required.
8. You complete any corrections identified in the survey report and ODW follow-up letter. You are responsible for correcting critical deficiencies of high public health risk promptly. ODW expects you to correct other, less critical, deficiencies by the next survey cycle.
9. You notify ODW in writing when the corrections are complete, or ask ODW for an extension to complete the work.
10. ODW tracks any critical deficiencies of high public health risk until you correct them.
11. You keep a copy of the survey results and any notification or compliance letters for your records.

Resources

To help you prepare for your sanitary survey, ODW developed the publication, *Preparing for a Sanitary Survey: Information to Help Small Water Systems* (331-238). This publication is online at http://www4.doh.wa.gov/dw/publications/publications.cfm

If you have questions, or you don't have access to the Internet, please call (800) 521-0323 or ODW regional office in your area:

Eastern Region (509) 456-3115
Northwest Region (253) 395-6750
Southwest Region (360) 236-3030

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